IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A bowsprit extending system for a bow of a sailboat hull having a deck above a waterline of the hull, said system placing an elongate bowsprit having a forward end and an aft end in either a retracted position with the bowsprit forward end near the forward end of the sailboat, or in an extended position with the bowsprit forward end forward of and substantially further above the waterline than is the sailboat deck, said system comprising:

a) a bowsprit positioner having a forward position and an aft position and mounted generally fore and aft on the sailboat bottom at the bow, said bowsprit's aft end positionable at either of the forward and aft positions of the positioner; and

b) a bowsprit support element mounted on the hull vertically above and forward of the positioner forward position, and in supportive connection to the bowsprit between the ends, said bowsprit having the retracted position when the bowsprit aft end is positioned at the positioner aft position and the extended position when positioned at the positioner forward position, thereby placing the bowsprit when in the extended position with the forward end thereof substantially farther above the waterline than is the deck.

2. (Original) The bowsprit extending system of claim 1 wherein the bowsprit positioner comprises:

a) an extender track mounted between the positioner's forward and aft locations to the sailboat bottom;

b) an extender car mounted on the extender track and shiftable fore and aft along the extender track between the positioner's forward and aft positions;

c) a bowsprit connector attaching the extender car to the bowsprit's aft end; and

d) a bowsprit position control mechanism in operative attachment to the extender car, and including a control element for controlling the fore and aft position of the extender car.

3. (Original) The bowsprit extending system of claim 2, wherein the bow includes a deck and wherein the extender track is mounted below the deck and the bowsprit projects through the deck when in the extended position.

4. (Original) The bowsprit extending system of claim 3, wherein the bowsprit support element is mounted in the bow.

5. (Original) The bowsprit extending system of claim 4, wherein the bowsprit support element comprises a slider.

6. (Original) The bowsprit extending system of claim 5, wherein the slider comprises a sleeve mounted at the bow forward and above the extender track and at least partly surrounding the bowsprit, said sleeve having a bore through which the bowsprit slides as the car shifts fore and aft along the extender track.

7. (Original) The bowsprit extending system of claim 6 wherein the sleeve is mounted on a pivot in the deck and whose axis is generally parallel to the waterline of the unheeled hull and transverse with respect to the hull centerline.

8. (Original) The bowsprit system of claim 7, wherein the sleeve includes a low-friction tape attached to the surface of a bore thereof, and against which the bowsprit slips.

9. (Original) The bowsprit system of claim 8, wherein the low-friction tape comprises ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene tape.

10. (Original) The bowsprit system of claim 8, including a vertically extending bracing structure attached to the hull adjacent to the positioner's forward position to bear transverse load applied by the bowsprit aft end.

11. (Original) The bowsprit system of claim 6, wherein the bowsprit includes a low friction tape attached to at least a portion of the upper surface of the bowsprit passing through the sleeve.

12. (Original) The bowsprit system of claim 11, wherein the low friction tape comprises ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene tape.

13. (Original) The bowsprit system of claim 5, wherein the slider system comprises a bowsprit track mounted along the bowsprit from the forward end and extending aft therefrom, and a bowsprit car slidably mounted on the bowsprit track, and attached to hull near the bow.

14. (Previously Presented) The bowsprit system of claim 13, wherein the bowsprit car is rotatably mounted to the deck.

15. (Original) The bowsprit system of claim 3, wherein the bowsprit connector comprises a pivot pin.

16. (Currently amended) A support system for an elongate bowsprit for a bow of a sailboat hull, said bowsprit having a forward end and an aft end, said system supporting the bowsprit in either a retracted position with the bowsprit forward end near the forward end of the sailboat, or in an extended position with the bowsprit forward end forward of and substantially further above the waterline than is the sailboat hull, said support system contained exclusively within the sailboat hull and supporting the bowsprit when extended, at a predetermined articulation angle <u>about a substantially horizontal axis relative to the sailboat hull</u>, said articulation angle at least 20 ° greater than the angle of the bowsprit in the retracted position.

17. (Currently amended) The support system of claim 16, wherein the articulation angle <u>about the horizontal axis</u> is at least 25 ° greater than the angle of the bowsprit in the retracted position.

18. (Currently amended) The support system of claim 17, wherein the articulation angle about the horizontal axis is at least 30 ° greater than the angle of the bowsprit in the retracted position.

19.* (Currently amended) The support system of claim 16, further comprising ~~A retractable bowsprit for the bow of a sailboat, said sailboat having~~ a sleeve attached to the sailboat at the bow thereof through which the bowsprit can slide~~, said bowsprit having a strip of low friction tape attached to the bowsprit surface and sliding through the sleeve as the bowsprit slides through the sleeve~~.

*Originally numbered incorrectly as claim 20.

21. (New) The support system of claim 19, including on the bowsprit surface, a strip of low friction tape that slides through the sleeve as the bowsprit slides through the sleeve.